

The President's Daily Brief

5 November 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Some political opposition to Thieu is shaping up in South Vietnam. (Page 1)

Israel is ready to search for oil in the Gulf of Suez. (Page 2)

50X1

The European Security Conference plan could let the Warsaw Pact nations expand their relations with the West but not weaken ties to the USSR. (Page 4)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Thieu's political rivals are showing signs of greater activity. General Duong Van "Big" Minh, who has avoided the limelight since his return from exile more than a year ago, has declared himself ready to serve the cause of national unity and has called for a national convention which might lead to a "truly representative government."

Minh's remarks can be linked to a speech last week by his long-time associate Senator Tran Van Don, who urged the creation of a neutral "third force" as a means of bringing an end to the war. Don has been increasingly critical of Thieu since last spring and has been hinting that he would like to be prime minister in a government headed by Minh.

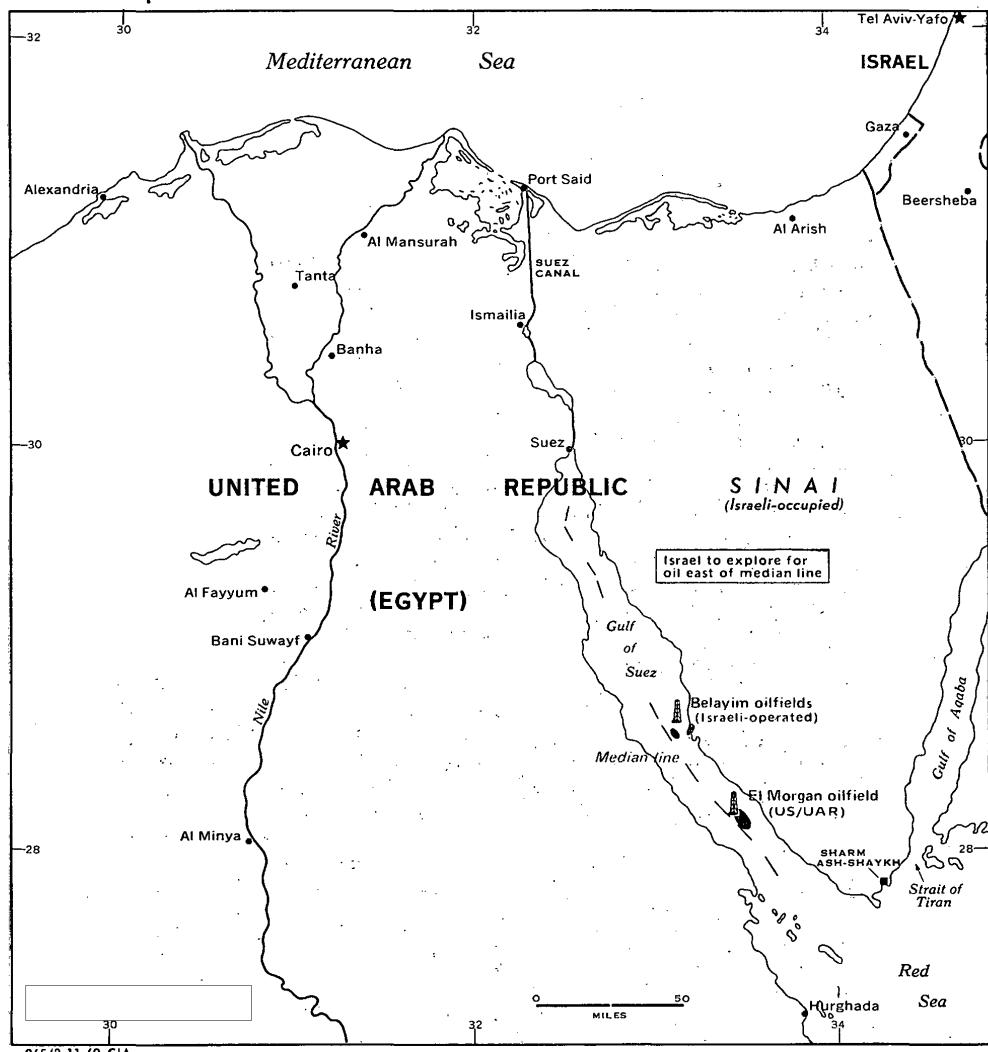
At the same time, [redacted], some of the more militant religious and peace circles have increased their efforts to forge an antigovernment alliance, partly in the hope of being able to rally behind Minh.

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Thieu has come under heavy domestic criticism because of his newest economic austerity measures. His opponents probably anticipate that continuing US troop withdrawals will weaken his authority and make him more vulnerable. As a result, men such as Minh and Don may have concluded that the time is ripe to begin putting themselves forward as an alternative to the present government. Don, in particular, seems to be suggesting that the Communists might be willing to negotiate an end to the war with a government in which Thieu and Ky play no role. The Communists sometimes have implied as much, but their primary aim in doing so probably is to undercut US support for Thieu.

Israel to Explore for Oil Offshore in Gulf of Suez



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ISRAEL

Tel Aviv is going ahead with its long-rumored plan to search for oil offshore near the southern end of the Gulf of Suez. It has arranged for a US company to conduct seismic exploration, and a Canadian-owned drilling rig for this purpose was to begin the 120-day trip from Quebec on 25 October. The proposed exploratory area, which is east of the median line, includes part of the concession now held jointly by the Egyptian state-owned oil company and Pan American Petroleum, a subsidiary of Indiana Standard.

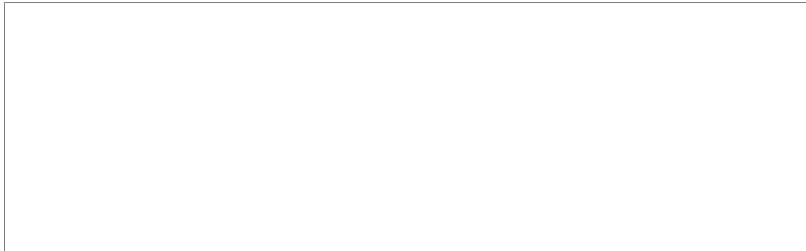
Disdaining the legal, political, and military implications of such a move, Israel argues that it has a right to exploit occupied territories. Moreover, it claims it will not interfere with Pan American's operations in the El Morgan oil field.

Forceful action by Egypt to prevent Israeli exploration in the area could bring Israeli reprisal against Cairo's revenue-producing operations at El Morgan. Egypt therefore might refrain from any action during the period--perhaps as long as two years--that it will take Israel to find and produce oil.

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EAST GERMANY - WEST GERMANY



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EUROPEAN SECURITY CONFERENCE

For the USSR, one of the lessons of the experience with Czechoslovakia was that bilateral dealings between East and West European states could get out of hand. A Soviet journalist, in a conversation with a US official in Moscow, said that the USSR will attempt to control future East-West contacts by channeling them through the European Security Conference.

Just how the system would work is hard to anticipate, and it may not yet be clear in the minds of the Soviet leaders. Their immediate concern is the East European response to initiatives from the Brandt government in West Germany. Perhaps the European Security Conference, if it takes place, will provide the Warsaw Pact countries with a framework for regulating such exchanges.

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NOTES

India: The struggle for control of the ruling Congress Party is growing more bitter with the likelihood of a formal split looming larger. Yesterday, the mediation efforts of a group of state leaders failed. Mrs. Gandhi continues to weed out all cabinet officials who are not committed to her side. The next few weeks will bring the greatest danger yet to Congress' traditional one-party rule--the major source of political stability in India.

Brazil: Carlos Marighella, leader of the country's most effective terrorist organization, was killed by police last night in Sao Paulo. During the preceding two days, police had rounded up 23 members of his gang. Marighella's group had a primary role in the kidnaping of Ambassador Elbrick in September, the most notorious of their many terrorist activities. Although Marighella's death will leave the remaining leftist extremists without a real leader, they may attempt some spectacular action--partly for revenge and partly to restore their damaged morale.

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